



Natural Resources Conservation Service
375 Jackson Street, Suite 600
St. Paul, MN 55101-1854

70 Years
"A Partner in Conservation Since 1935"

Phone: (651) 602-7900
FAX: (651) 602-7914

Transmitted via Email

MINNESOTA BULLETIN NO. 300-5-53

July 6, 2005

SUBJECT: LTP – CONSERVATION SECURITY PROGRAM (CSP) SIGN-UP EVALUATION

Action Requested by July 29, 2005

Purpose. To solicit suggestions for changes in the CSP sign-up process.

Expiration Date. September 30, 2005.

The 2005 CSP sign-up has recently ended and we're now awaiting notification of approved offers. We're extremely proud of the effort displayed by the Minnesota field staff involved with the completion of this task. Despite the newness and complexity of this program, and the problematic performance of our web based planning and contracting tools, the pace of CSP delivery kept moving forward, allowing us to reach the payment phase.

The future of CSP is of the utmost importance for NRCS. Chief Knight has been quoted as stating, "CSP is a barometer in the public's perception of the agency. It is imperative that we demonstrate our abilities in the delivery of this program."

With that charge in mind, it's important for us to take time and evaluate the CSP sign-up process and procedures. Listed below is a set of questions and answers distributed by Craig Derickson, national CSP program manager. In these questions he is openly seeking suggestions and recommendations to improve the following areas of CSP; 1) training for field staff; 2) the CSP self-assessment workbook; 3) eligibility tools and; 4) promoting and marketing the 2006 sign-up.

1. Will there be a FY 05 CSP national debriefing session?

A == YES, we are planning to have a CSP debriefing meeting this year. We have talked about having it in September or October but no dates are set at this time.

Minnesota will likely be sending a representative number of field staff that worked directly with the 2005 sign-up to provide feedback to the national leadership on our CSP experiences.

2. What changes are anticipated for the Self-Assessment Workbook?

A == The Self Assessment Workbook will be updated to fix some minor wording issues, improve the layout and adjust font size, color etc. One area we have recently decided to place even more emphasis on is the need for the producer to complete the self assessment, organize their records, and

to bring to us a complete application. We are still finding instances of NRCS staff spending too much time on producer's incomplete application materials and sorting through records.

3. What changes are anticipated for the assessment tools?

A == The assessment tools are science based and are constantly being evaluated for improvements. However, I am not aware of any planned revisions to RUSLE 2 and the SCI, Pasture Score, Range Health and such. We have discussed the idea of correlating an index value to the Grazing Lands tools and to Water Quality (Nutrient Mgt specifically) so that we can aggregate incremental improvements like we do with the SCI and IWM.

4. Will there be regional program training sessions for 2006?

A == None are actually scheduled at this time. The 2005 roll-out with five training sessions nationwide was a significant undertaking and required a large cadre of NHQ and specialists from the Centers. We will have to evaluate the situation as we complete the 2005 activities and determine what training is needed for 2006. We may just bring the State Program managers together and give them additional training on specific issues and updates so that they can train the in-state staff that needs to prepare for the program in 2006.

5. Will the Thursday Net Meetings now focus on 06?

A == YES - partly. We will continue to provide some guidance on getting ready for 2006, but we still have a significant amount of work to get done on these 2005 contracts. Once the contracts selected for funding have been identified, the work needed to finish populating the contract and then to actually make the payments will take a few weeks to complete. As that work gets completed we will begin to focus more and more on 2006 year.

Please review this information and provide your suggestions or recommendation for improvements to CSP to Leah Duzy by July 29, 2005.

WILLIAM HUNT
State Conservationist

DIST: ASTC (FO)
FO